

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 000137

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NB AND EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAI](#) [D](#) [PGOV](#) [BO](#) [UP](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: PDAS VOLKER MEETS WITH LITHUANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ARCHITECT

REF: VILNIUS 102

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Alexander Titolo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (C) EUR PDAS Kurt Volker and Ambassador discussed regional issues February 8 with MFA Undersecretary Albinas Januska, Lithuania's chief foreign policy strategist. Januska provided a readout of a "difficult conversation" between GOL FM Valionis and Ukrainian FM Tarasyuk in which Valionis urged increased transparency about the Russian-Ukrainian gas deal. Januska apologized for Lithuanian Prime Minister Brazauskas's endorsement of Social Democrat Alexander Kozulin in Belarus's upcoming elections. He also reiterated longstanding GOL concerns about Russia's attempts to influence Lithuanian politics through media manipulation -- citing the regional anti-NGO campaign and (much more implausibly) the anti-Islamic cartoons as examples. The meeting highlighted the nervousness (verging on paranoia) of GOL officials about their rough neighborhood. End Summary.

UNHELPFUL RUSSIA

[12.](#) (C) Januska launched into the meeting with PDAS Volker by noting Lithuanian concern about suspected Russian efforts to set back democratization efforts in the region. He said such efforts, according to one local academic, could even include a role in fanning greater controversy around the Mohammed cartoons by supporting their publication in the local Lithuanian press. The Under Secretary said that this experience shows how vulnerable Lithuania is to outside influence, and noted that the GOL is preparing a strategy in Lithuania to counter these tactics.

[13.](#) (C) PDAS Volker said that while there is general agreement that developments within Russia and in Russian foreign policy were disturbing, the USG believes a public confrontation with the Kremlin would be counterproductive. He stressed that we must find other ways to support change in Russia, including through NGOs. Januska accepted this point, but reiterated that "Russia is doing everything possible to discredit us."

GOL SHARES CONCERNS ON UKRAINE

[14.](#) (C) Januska reviewed a recent phone conversation between GOL FM Valionis and his Ukrainian counterpart in which Valionis stressed to Tarasyuk that "if you want to be pro-European, you have to be transparent." Tarasyuk, Januska said, essentially responded that there was nothing he could do about the deal. The Lithuanian official described the conversation as "difficult" and lamented the tough position the Ukrainian FM is in. PDAS Volker underscored the need to push for a better understanding of the gas deal.

MORE HEARTACHE ON BELARUS

[15.](#) (C) Januska offered an explanation for the PM's endorsement of Kozulin (reftel), claiming that the Belarusian's trip to Lithuania was the result of an invitation from the Foreign Ministry. Januska explained that the purpose of the MFA's invitation was to convince Kozulin to withdraw from the race in protest if the Central Election Committee does not certify United Opposition candidate Alexander Milinkevich. Januska had set up meetings for Kozulin with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party as cover for the ministry. Unfortunately, Januska explained, this put Kozulin directly in the path of the PM, who chose to endorse his sister party's candidate. Januska also laid out for PDAS Volker the GOL's position that Lithuania will not accept the undemocratic incorporation of Belarus into Russia -- which many in the Lithuanian political circle consider a live possibility.

[16.](#) (C) The Ambassador raised the issue of the registration

by the GOL of European Humanities University International (EHU), an independent Belarusian educational institution currently in exile in Vilnius. EHU officials and media have detailed the internal disagreements within the GOL about accrediting the University-in-exile, a requirement for it to be able to grant diplomas of any value in Europe. Januska predicted the government will accredit the institution in the coming week.

COMMENT

17. (C) PDAS Volker's meeting with Undersecretary Januska put Lithuanian anxieties about regional issues on full display. With elections in Ukraine and Belarus coming next month, and the significant potential for setbacks to Lithuania's strategic interests in both countries, GOL officials are increasingly relying for comfort on their favorite conspiracy theory: that all bad things in Eastern Europe flow from the Kremlin. We will help them harness their enthusiasm for promoting democracy in the region as this crucial next phase in Belarus and Ukraine approaches.

18. (U) PDAS Volker did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.
MULL